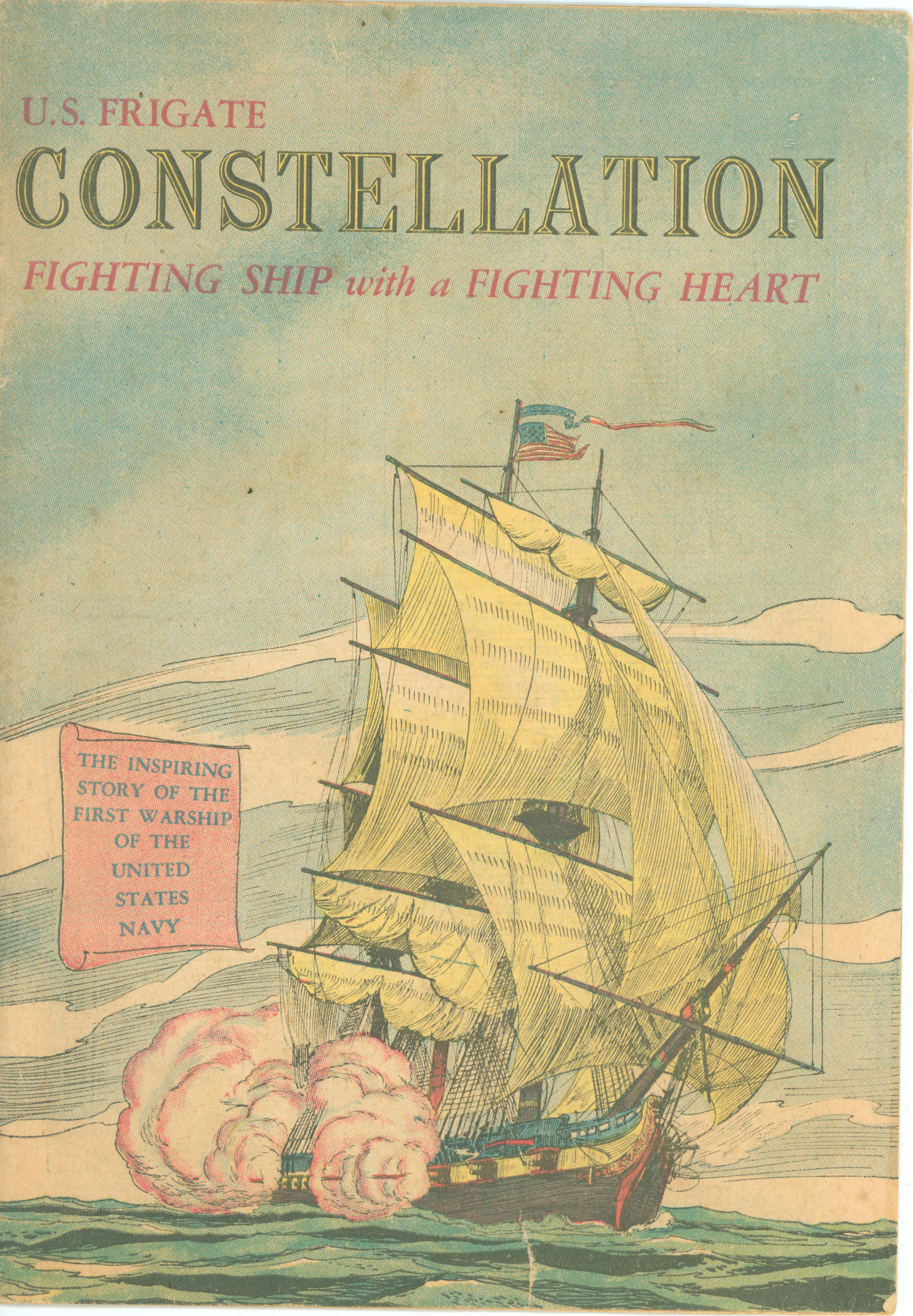
U.S. FRIGATE

CONSTELLATION

FIGHTING SHIP with a FIGHTING HEART



THIS IS AMERICA 1794

FIVE YEARS OLD... A LUSTY REPUBLIC!

FIFTEEN STATES... MORE SOON, AS NEW TERRITORIES OPEN UP.

FIVE MILLION PEOPLE! ...AND MORE ARRIVING EVERY DAY IN THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY!

FARMLANDS ARE RICH.. GOOD FARMS ARE CHEAP TO BUY. MOST PEOPLE LIVE ON FARMS.

SETTLERS ARE CARVING A NEW NATION OUT OF WILDERNESS

THE MACHINE AGE IS COMING!

SHIPPING IS BOOMING! UNITED STATES PROSPERITY DEPENDS UPON TRADE WITH EUROPE, WITH THE ORIENT.

EVERYWHERE THERE IS OPPORTUNITY IN A FREE LAND **BUT..THERE IS NO FREEDOM OF THE SEAS!**

BARBARY PIRATES ARE RAIDING OUR SHIPS. FRENCH PIRATES ARE RAIDING OUR SHIPS. IT IS EASY BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES HAS NO NAVY.

FOR 9 YEARS THE UNITED STATES HAS HAD NO NAVY. WHEN THE MEMORY OF JOHN PAUL JONES BEGAN TO FADE, WE SOLD OUR CONTINENTAL NAVY. NOW SHIPS OF OUR YOUNG REPUBLIC ARE HELPLESS AGAINST ATTACK ON THE HIGH SEAS.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

IN 1794, GEORGE WASHINGTON SIGNS A BILL AUTHORIZING THE CONSTRUCTION OF 6 FRIGATES TO PROTECT OUR SHIPPING! THE NEW U.S. WILL HAVE A NAVY!

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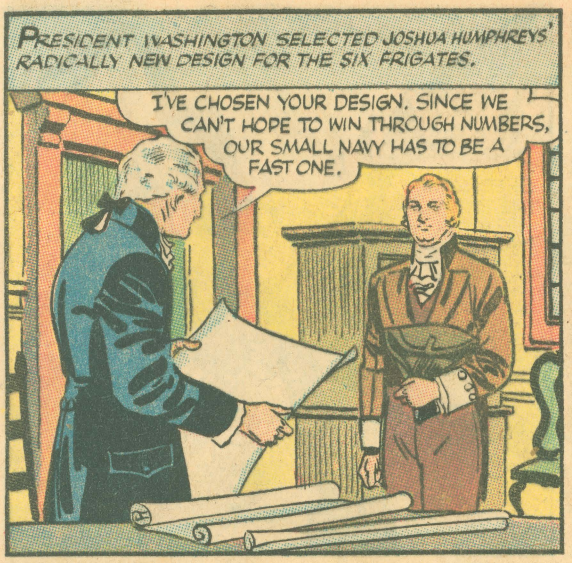
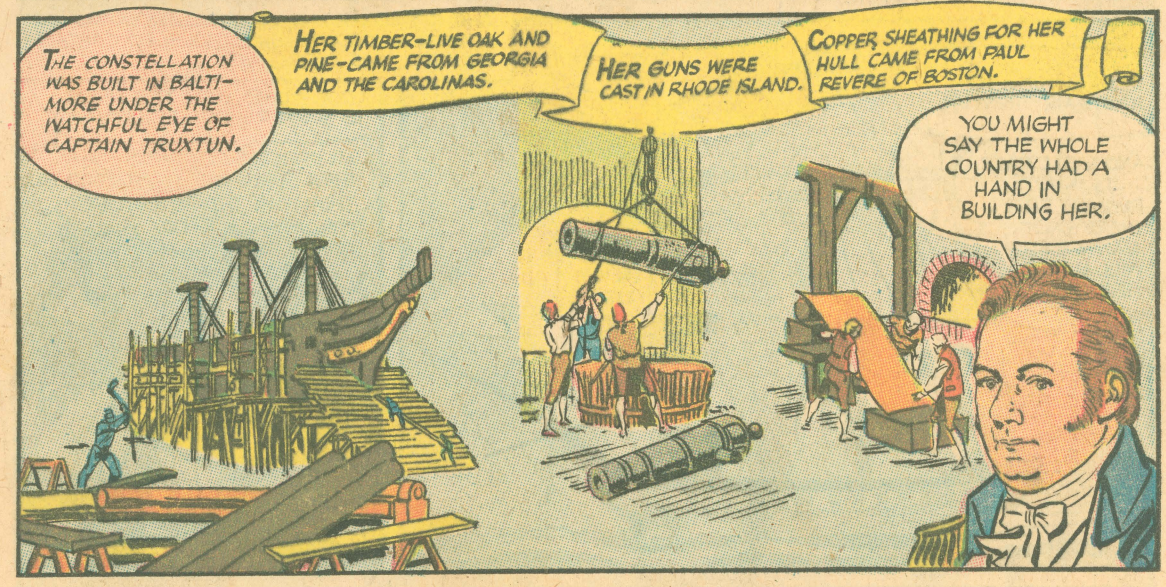
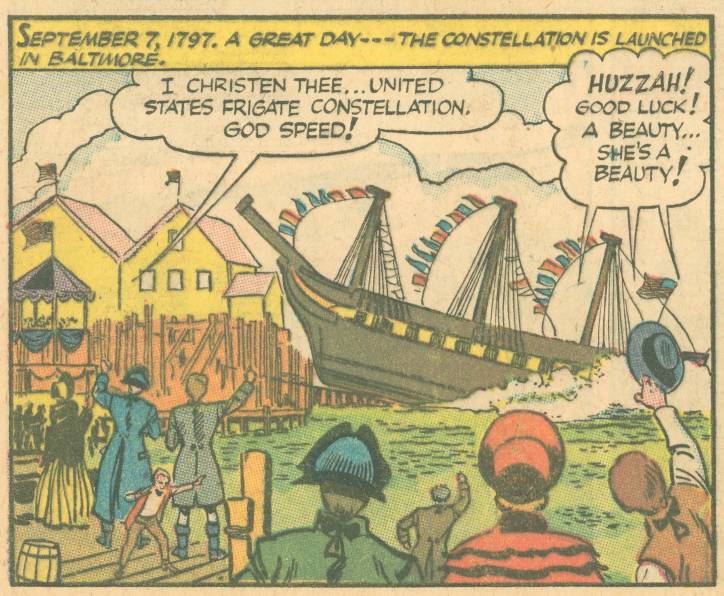
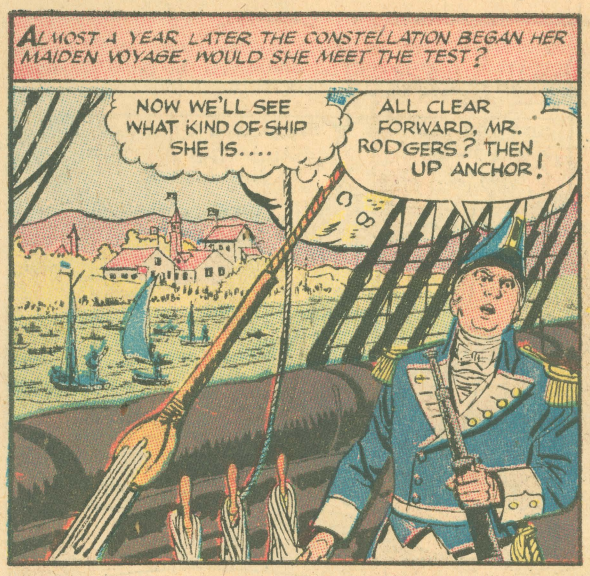

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON SELECTED JOSHUA HUMPHREYS' RADICALLY NEW DESIGN FOR THE SIX FRIGATES.
I'VE CHOSEN YOUR DESIGN. SINCE WE CAN'T HOPE TO WIN THROUGH NUMBERS, OUR SMALL NAVY HAS TO BE A FAST ONE.

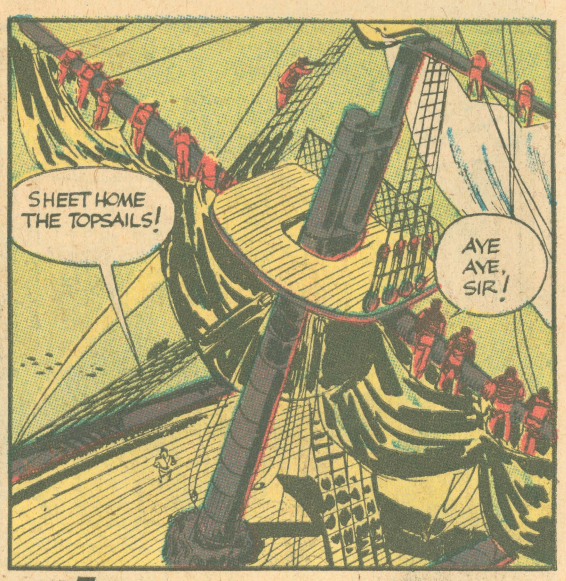
HUMPHREYS TOOK HIS REVOLUTIONARY DESIGN TO THOMAS TRUXTUN, WHO WAS TO BE CAPTAIN OF THE CONSTELLATION. IT WAS TRUXTUN'S JOB TO PLAN THE MASTS AND SAILS.
SHE'LL BE LEAN--- AND LOW IN THE WATER.
AND WITH PLENTY OF SAIL---THE FASTEST SHIP AFLOAT.

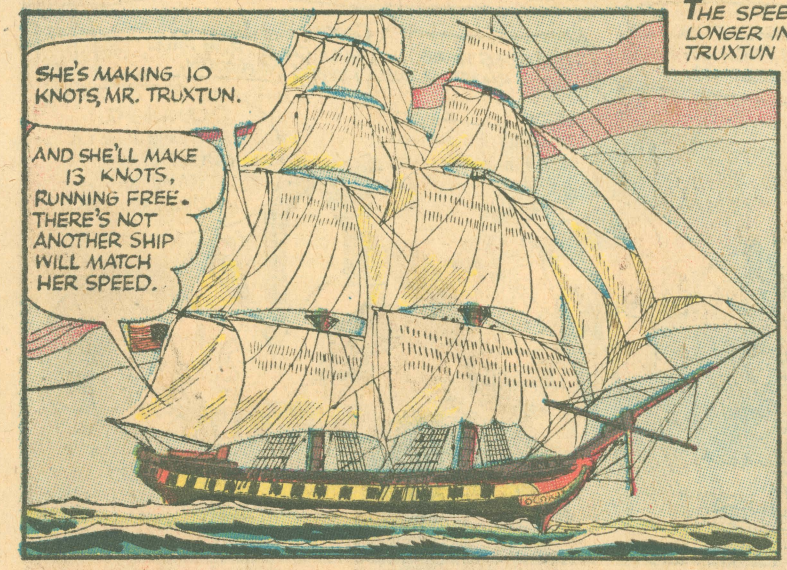

THE CONSTELLATION WAS BUILT IN BALTIMORE UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF CAPTAIN TRUXTUN.
HER TIMBER-LIVE OAK AND PINE-CAME FROM GEORGIA AND THE CAROLINAS.
HER GUNS WERE CAST IN RHODE ISLAND.
COPPER SHEATHING FOR HER HULL CAME FROM PAUL REVERE OF BOSTON.
YOU MIGHT SAY THE WHOLE COUNTRY HAD A HAND IN BUILDING HER.


SEPTEMBER 7, 1797. A GREAT DAY---THE CONSTELLATION IS LAUNCHED IN BALTIMORE.
I CHRISTEN THEE...UNITED STATES FRIGATE CONSTELLATION. GOD SPEED!
HUZZAH! GOOD LUCK! A BEAUTY... SHE'S A BEAUTY!

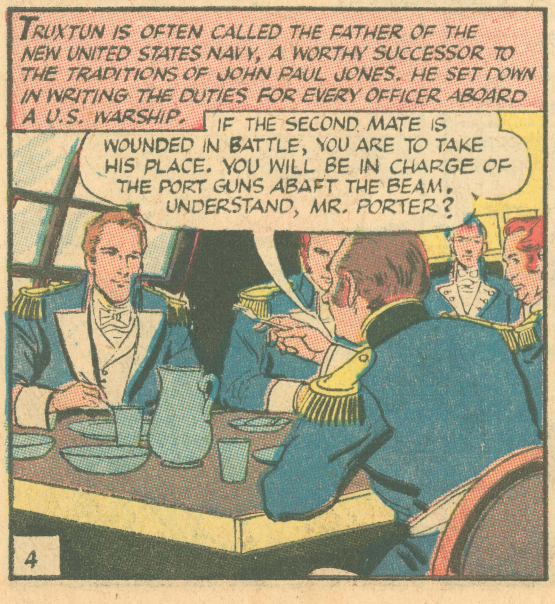
BUT AMONG THE THOUSANDS GATHERED TO TO CHEER THE BIRTH OF THE CONSTELLATION ---AND THE UNITED STATES NAVY--- THERE WERE MANY SKEPTICS.
A BEAUTY, YES ---BUT A MADMAN'S DESIGN!
AYE! SHE'LL NEVER CARRY ALL THAT CANVAS AND 38 GUNS AS WELL. SHE'LL SINK FIRST!


ALMOST A YEAR LATER THE CONSTELLATION BEGAN HER MAIDEN VOYAGE. WOULD SHE MEET THE TEST?
NOW WE'LL SEE WHAT KIND OF SHIP SHE IS....
ALL CLEAR FORWARD, MR. RODGERS? THEN UP ANCHOR!

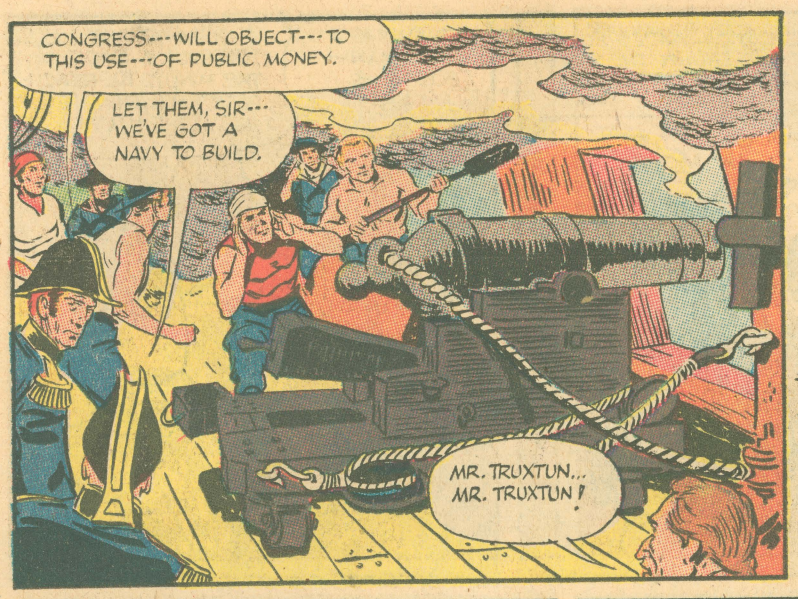

SHEET HOME THE TOPSAILS!
AYE AYE, SIR!


THE SPEED OF THE CONSTELLATION WAS NO LONGER IN DOUBT. WHAT TROUBLED CAPTAIN TRUXTUN WAS DISCIPLINE.
SHE'S MAKING 10 KNOTS, MR. TRUXTUN.
AND SHE'LL MAKE 13 KNOTS, RUNNING FREE. THERE'S NOT ANOTHER SHIP WILL MATCH HER SPEED.

LOOK ALIVE, SIR! THE HELM IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!
MY OFFICERS DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR DUTIES ARE. I'LL HAVE TO TELL THEM WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO.

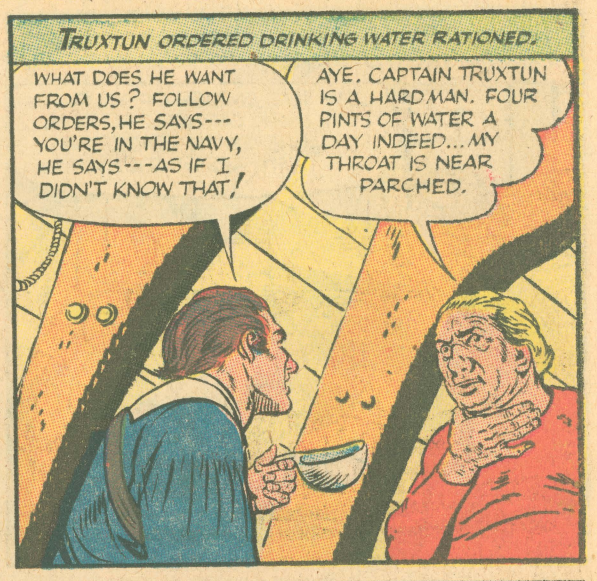

TRUXTUN IS OFTEN CALLED THE FATHER OF THE NEW UNITED STATES NAVY, A WORTHY SUCCESSOR TO THE TRADITIONS OF JOHN PAUL JONES. HE SET DOWN IN WRITING THE DUTIES FOR EVERY OFFICER ABOARD A U.S. WARSHIP.
IF THE SECOND MATE IS WOUNDED IN BATTLE, YOU ARE TO TAKE HIS PLACE. YOU WILL BE IN CHARGE OF THE PORT GUNS ABAFT THE BEAM. UNDERSTAND, MR. PORTER?

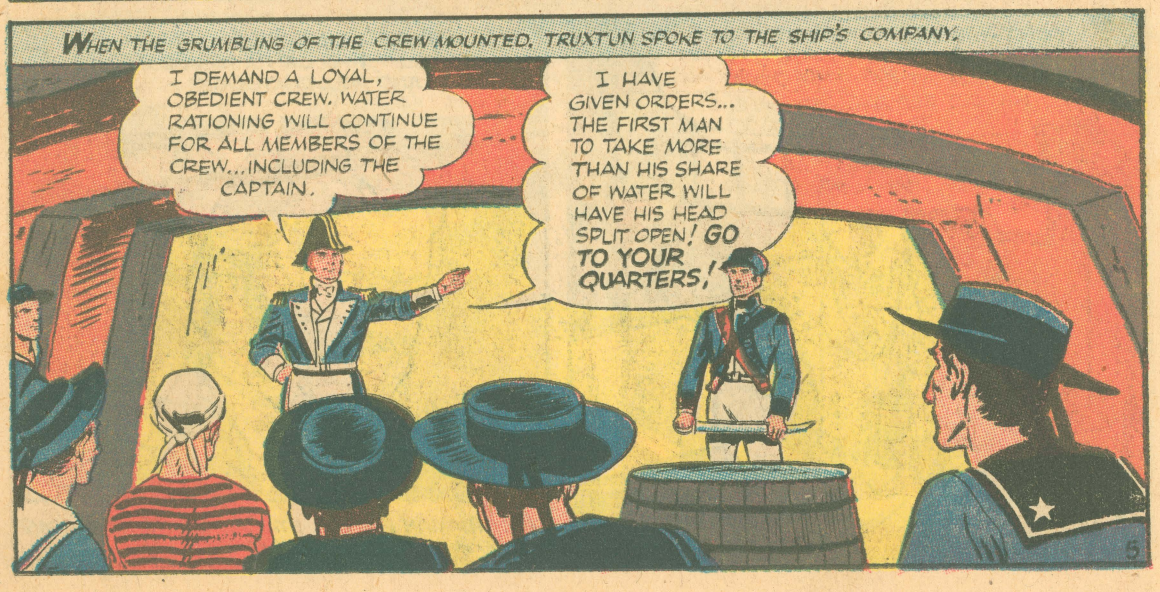
TRUXTUN WAS THE FIRST TO HOLD GUN DRILLS WITH LIVE AMMUNITION.
GUNPOWDER, SIR? FOR PRACTICE GUN DRILL?
OF COURSE, MR. RODGERS! GUNPOWDER IS WHAT THEY'LL USE IN BATTLE!

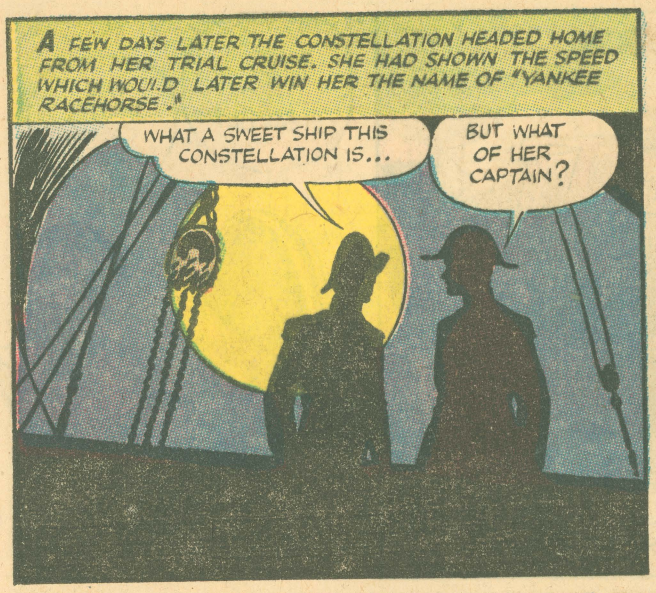

CONGRESS---WILL OBJECT---TO THIS USE---OF PUBLIC MONEY.
LET THEM, SIR--- WE'VE GOT A NAVY TO BUILD.
MR. TRUXTUN... MR. TRUXTUN!

WHAT IS IT MAN? SPEAK UP!
THE WATER CASKS, SIR...

THEY'RE LEAKING BADLY, MR. TRUXTUN.
DON'T STAND THERE GAPING, SAILOR. HURRY MAN! GET THE SHIP'S CARPENTER TO CAULK THEM UP.


TRUXTUN ORDERED DRINKING WATER RATIONED.
WHAT DOES HE WANT FROM US? FOLLOW ORDERS, HE SAYS--- YOU'RE IN THE NAVY, HE SAYS---AS IF I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!
AYE. CAPTAIN TRUXTUN IS A HARD MAN. FOUR PINTS OF WATER A DAY INDEED... MY THROAT IS NEAR PARCHED.

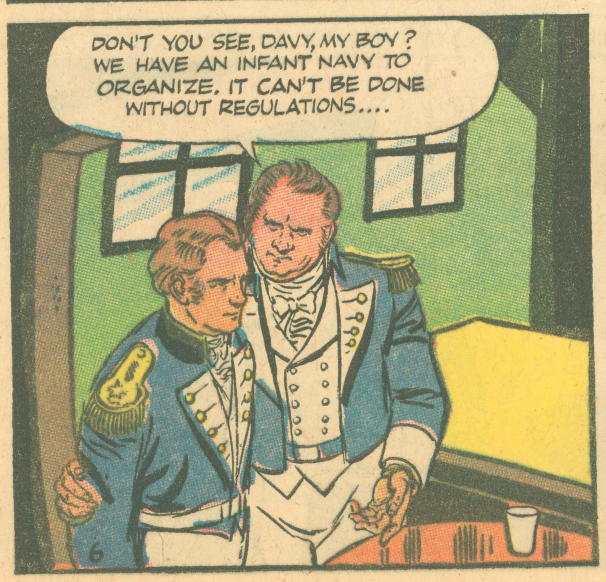

WHEN THE GRUMBLING OF THE CREW MOUNTED, TRUXTUN SPOKE TO THE SHIP'S COMPANY.
I DEMAND A LOYAL, OBEDIENT CREW. WATER RATIONING WILL CONTINUE FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE CREW... INCLUDING THE CAPTAIN.
I HAVE GIVEN ORDERS... THE FIRST MAN TO TAKE MORE THAN HIS SHARE OF WATER WILL HAVE HIS HEAD SPLIT OPEN! GO TO YOUR QUARTERS!


A FEW DAYS LATER THE CONSTELLATION HEADED HOME FROM HER TRIAL CRUISE. SHE HAD SHOWN THE SPEED WHICH WOULD LATER WIN HER THE NAME OF "YANKEE RACEHORSE."
WHAT A SWEET SHIP THIS CONSTELLATION IS...
BUT WHAT OF HER CAPTAIN?

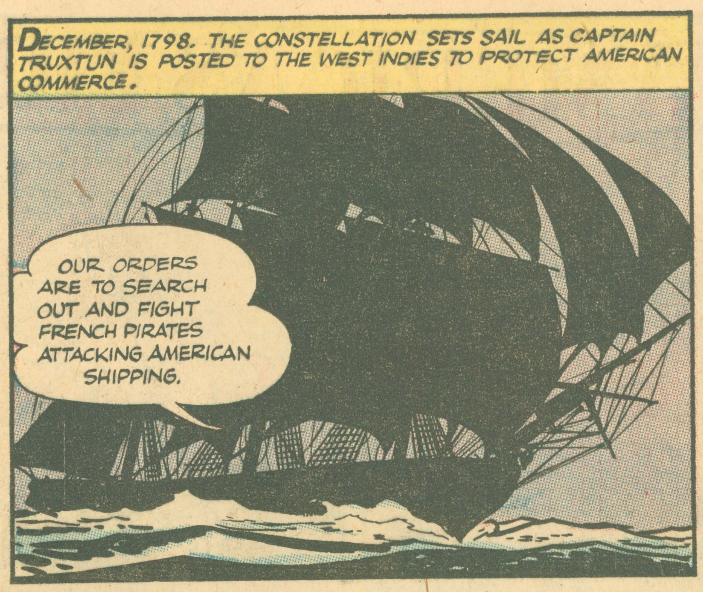
TRUXTUN IS A HARD MAN--- BUT HE IS FAIR.
I DISAGREE WITH YOU, SIR! IN FACT, THE MINUTE WE REACH PORT I'M RESIGNING FROM THE NAVY!

TRUE TO HIS WORD, MIDSHIPMAN PORTER WENT TO CAPTAIN TRUXTUN'S CABIN.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR TYRANNY, CAPTAIN TRUXTUN. I AM HEREWITH TENDERING MY RESIGNATION.

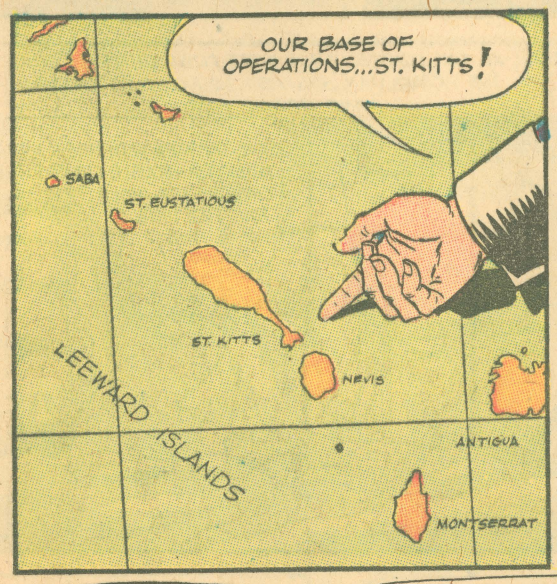
WHY, YOU YOUNG DOG! YOU SHALL NEVER LEAVE THE NAVY IF I CAN HELP IT.

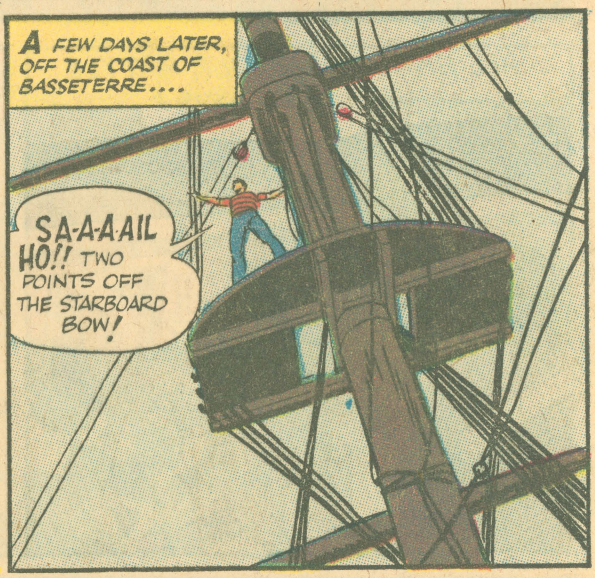

DON'T YOU SEE, DAVY, MY BOY? WE HAVE AN INFANT NAVY TO ORGANIZE. IT CAN'T BE DONE WITHOUT REGULATIONS....

...AND DISCIPLINE. WE NEED MEN LIKE YOU---WHO CAN GIVE ORDERS--- AND FOLLOW THEM!
MIDSHIPMAN PORTER STAYED, LATER TO BECOME A HERO AND A RENOWNED CAPTAIN.

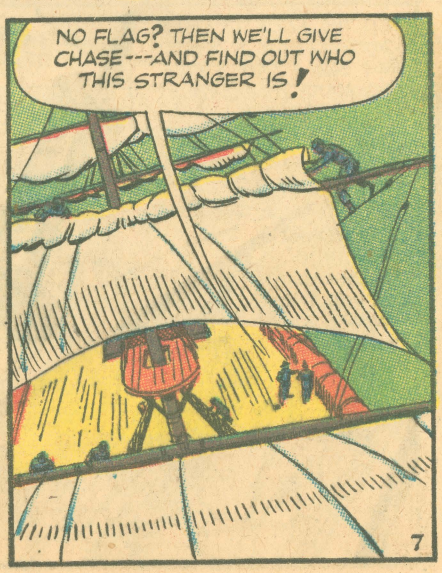

DECEMBER, 1798. THE CONSTELLATION SETS SAIL AS CAPTAIN TRUXTUN IS POSTED TO THE WEST INDIES TO PROTECT AMERICAN COMMERCE.
OUR ORDERS ARE TO SEARCH OUT AND FIGHT FRENCH PIRATES ATTACKING AMERICAN SHIPPING.

THESE ARE THE WATERS WHERE WE'LL FIND THE PIRATES...

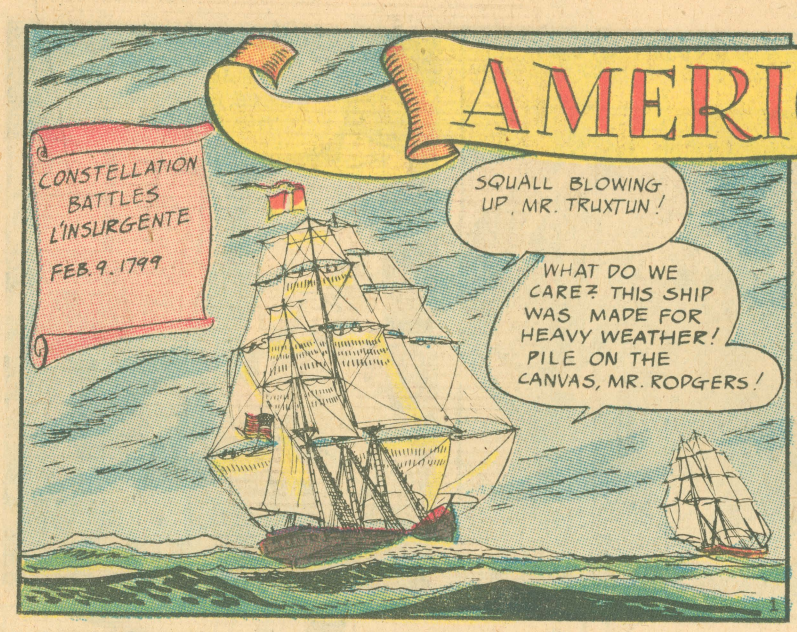

OUR BASE OF OPERATIONS...ST. KITTS!
SABA
ST. EUSTATIOUS
ST. KITTS
NEVIS
LEEWARD ISLANDS
ANTIGUA
MONTSERRAT

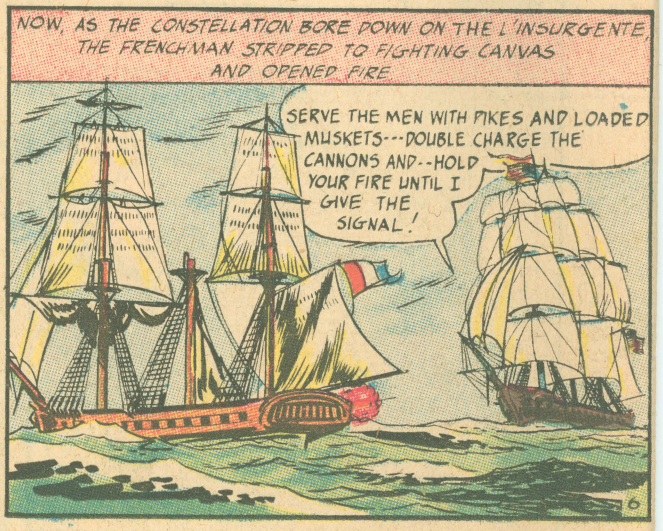

A FEW DAYS LATER, OFF THE COAST OF BASSETERRE....
SA-A-A-AIL HO!! TWO POINTS OFF THE STARBOARD BOW!

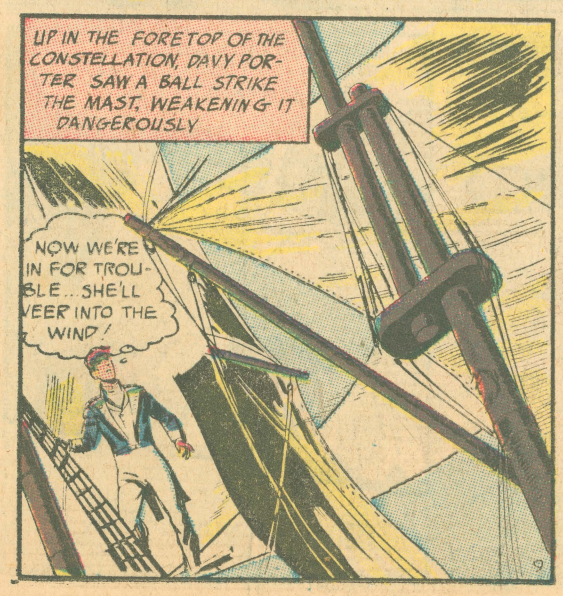
MR. RODGERS, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF HER?
A FRIGATE BY THE LINES OF HER... BUT OF HER NATIONALITY I CANNOT TELL, SIR. SHE CARRIES NO FLAG!


NO FLAG? THEN WE'LL GIVE CHASE---AND FIND OUT WHO THIS STRANGER IS!

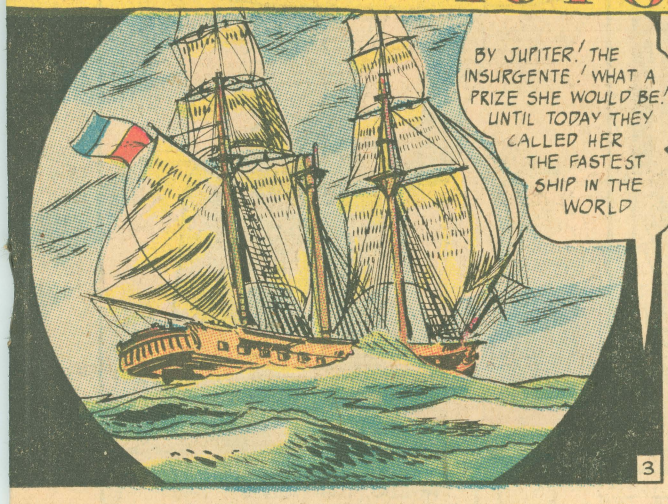
AMERICA'S FIRST

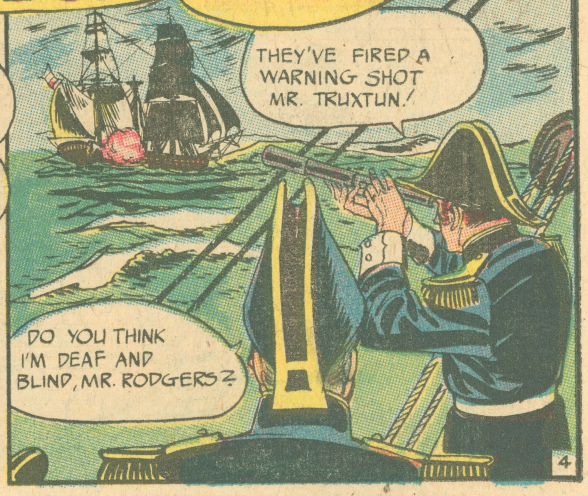


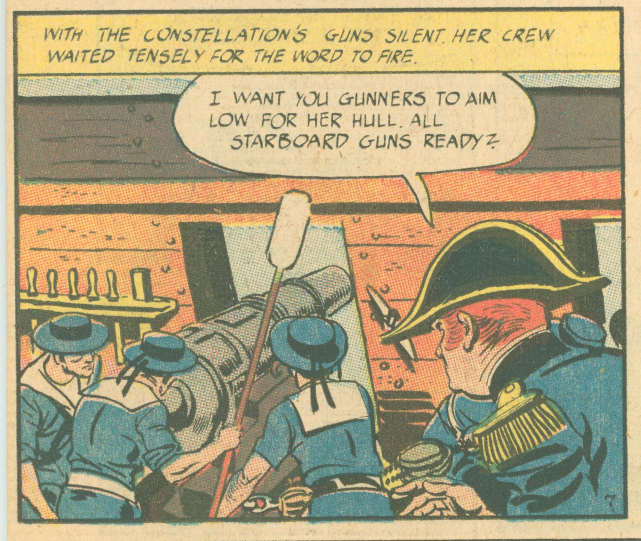


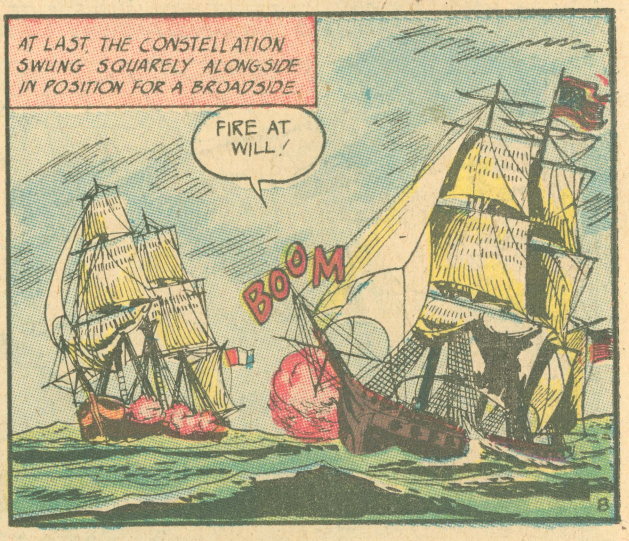


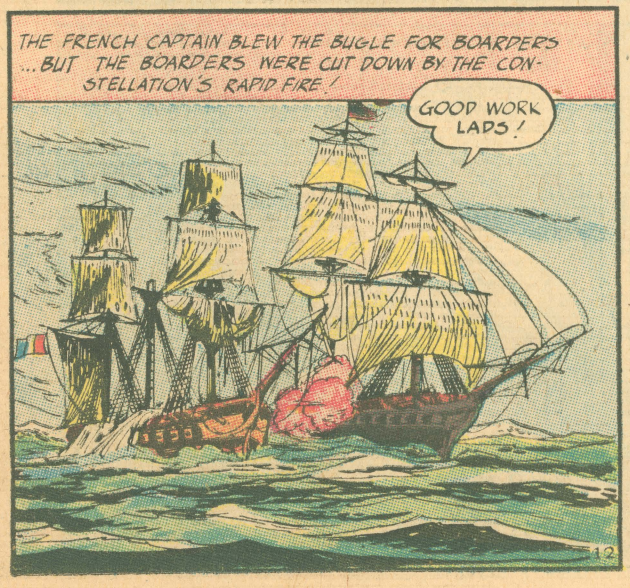
T NAVAL VICTORY



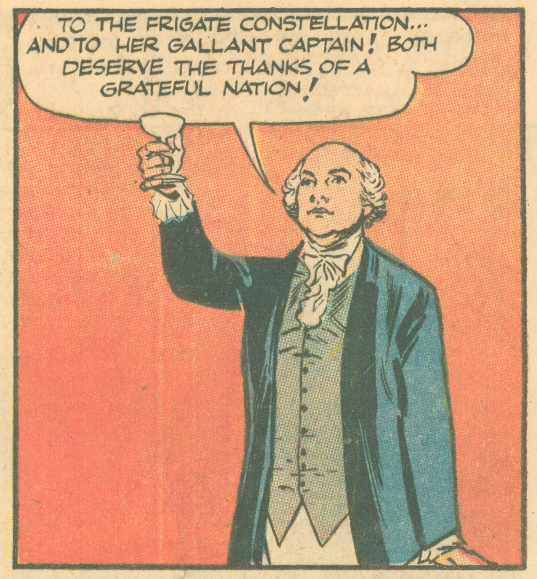


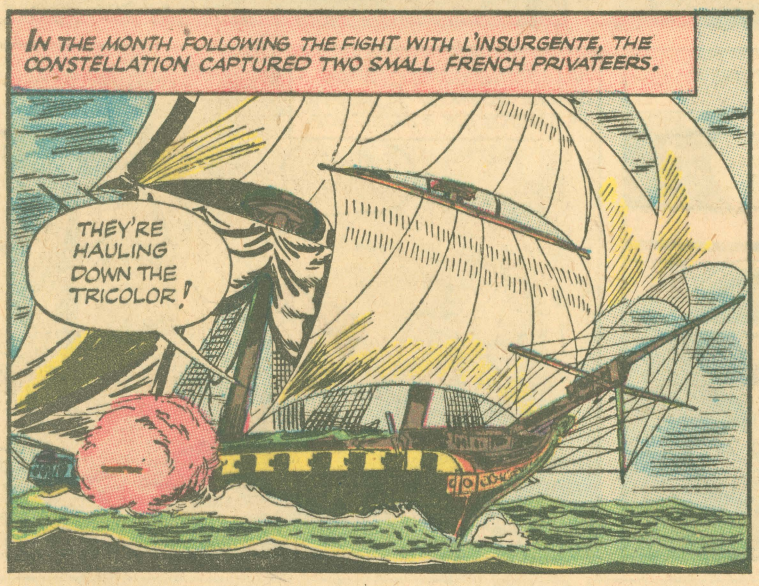






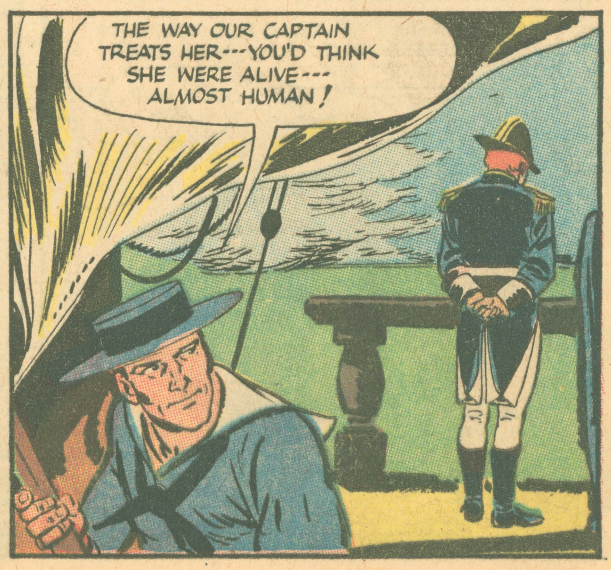
NEWS OF THE CONSTELLATION'S SUCCESS REACHED PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS.
WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT THE CONSTELLATION HAS WON OUR REPUBLIC'S FIRST NAVAL VICTORY!


TO THE FRIGATE CONSTELLATION... AND TO HER GALLANT CAPTAIN! BOTH DESERVE THE THANKS OF A GRATEFUL NATION!

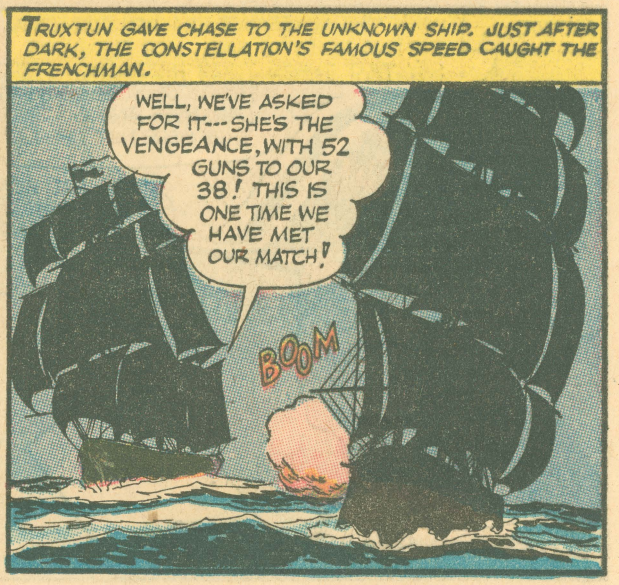

IN THE MONTH FOLLOWING THE FIGHT WITH L'INSURGENTE, THE CONSTELLATION CAPTURED TWO SMALL FRENCH PRIVATEERS.
THEY'RE HAULING DOWN THE TRICOLOR!

HULLO, CAPTAIN OF THE UNION...WE ACCEPT YOUR SURRENDER!

FIRST THE INSURGENTE--- THEN THE DILIGENT---AND NOW THE UNION. WHAT A SHIP WE HAVE HERE!
TRUE ENOUGH...


THE WAY OUR CAPTAIN TREATS HER---YOU'D THINK SHE WERE ALIVE--- ALMOST HUMAN!

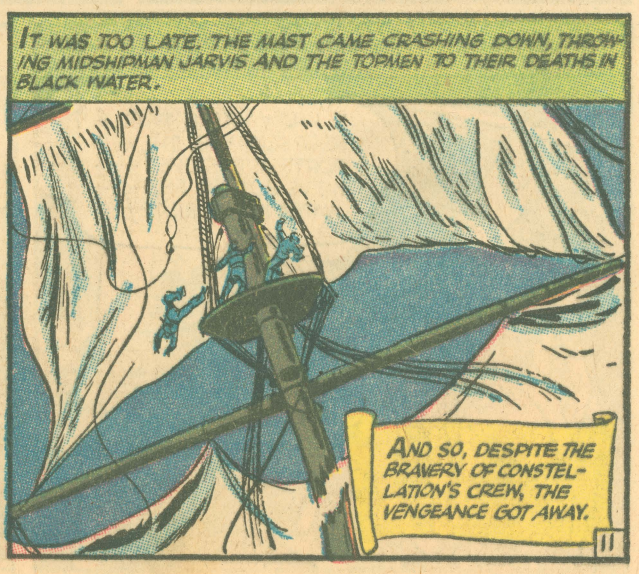
FEBRUARY 2, 1800. THE CONSTELLATION SIGHTS A SAIL TO THE SOUTHEAST.
FRENCH... AND HALF AGAIN AS BIG AS US! WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE'S RUNNING OFF?
MIGHT BE HER CARGO, SIR. I'VE HEARD TELL THEY'RE CARRYING GOLD IN THESE PARTS.

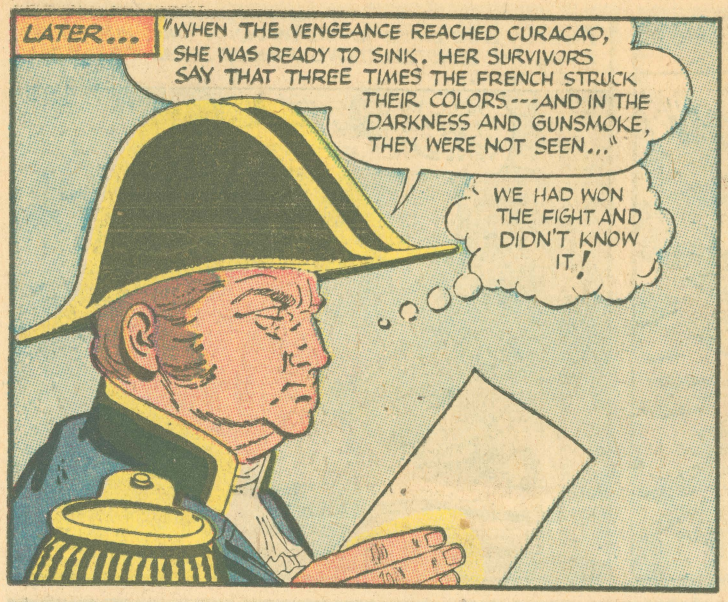

TRUXTUN GAVE CHASE TO THE UNKNOWN SHIP. JUST AFTER DARK, THE CONSTELLATION'S FAMOUS SPEED CAUGHT THE FRENCHMAN.
WELL, WE'VE ASKED FOR IT---SHE'S THE VENGEANCE, WITH 52 GUNS TO OUR 38! THIS IS ONE TIME WE HAVE MET OUR MATCH!
BOOM

THE BATTLE RAGED FOR FIVE HOURS---THE MOST DREADFUL FIGHT OF THE CONSTELLATION'S CAREER.
WE'RE IN A BAD WAY. FORTY MEN WOUNDED... I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN HOLD OUT!
MR. TRUXTUN, SIR...

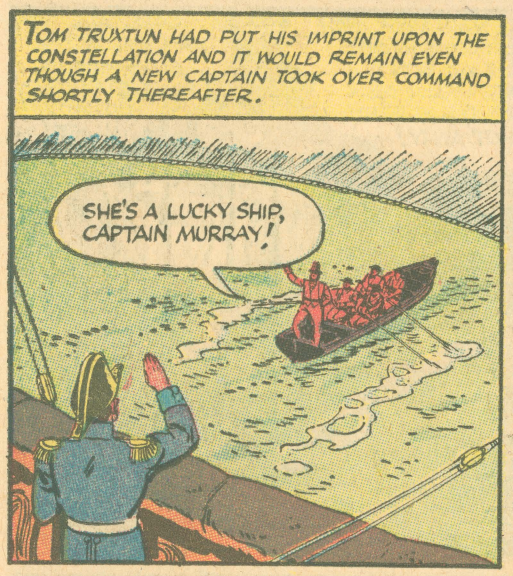
...THE MAIN MAST, SIR! SHE'S GOING TO GIVE WAY IF WE DON'T BRACE HER. EVERY SHROUD HAS BEEN SHOT AWAY!
CALL ALL HANDS FROM THE GUNS---WE'VE GOT TO SAVE THAT MAST!

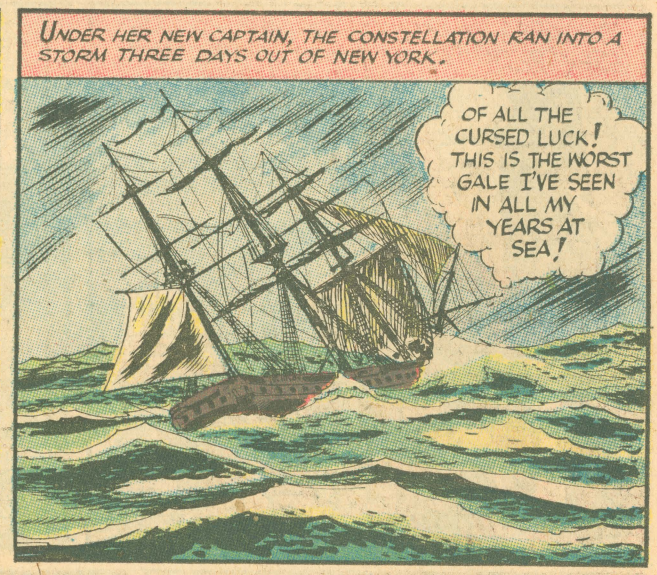
IS JARVIS STILL ALOFT?
YES, SIR. HE'S STICKING BY HIS POST... HE KNOWS WE HAVE A CHANCE IF WE CAN SAVE THE MAST.

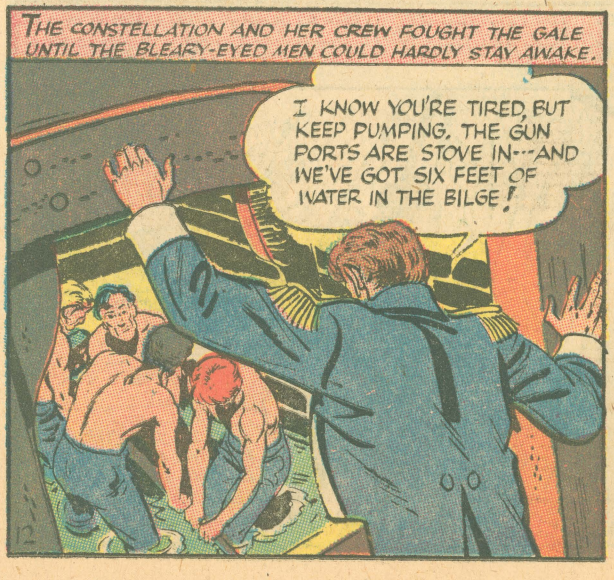

IT WAS TOO LATE. THE MAST CAME CRASHING DOWN, THROWING MIDSHIPMAN JARVIS AND THE TOPMEN TO THEIR DEATHS IN BLACK WATER.
AND SO, DESPITE THE BRAVERY OF CONSTELLATION'S CREW, THE VENGEANCE GOT AWAY.


LATER...
"WHEN THE VENGEANCE REACHED CURACAO, SHE WAS READY TO SINK. HER SURVIVORS SAY THAT THREE TIMES THE FRENCH STRUCK THEIR COLORS---AND IN THE DARKNESS AND GUNSMOKE, THEY WERE NOT SEEN..."
WE HAD WON THE FIGHT AND DIDN'T KNOW IT!

WHEN THE DETAILS OF THE CONSTELLATION'S COURAGEOUS ACTION REACHED THE UNITED STATES...
CAPTAIN TRUXTUN THE CONGRESS HAS VOTED YOU THIS MEDAL.

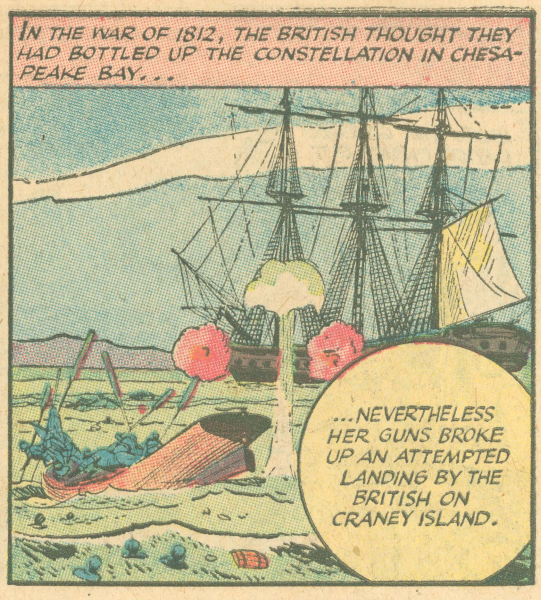

TOM TRUXTUN HAD PUT HIS IMPRINT UPON THE CONSTELLATION AND IT WOULD REMAIN EVEN THOUGH A NEW CAPTAIN TOOK OVER COMMAND SHORTLY THEREAFTER.
SHE'S A LUCKY SHIP, CAPTAIN MURRAY!

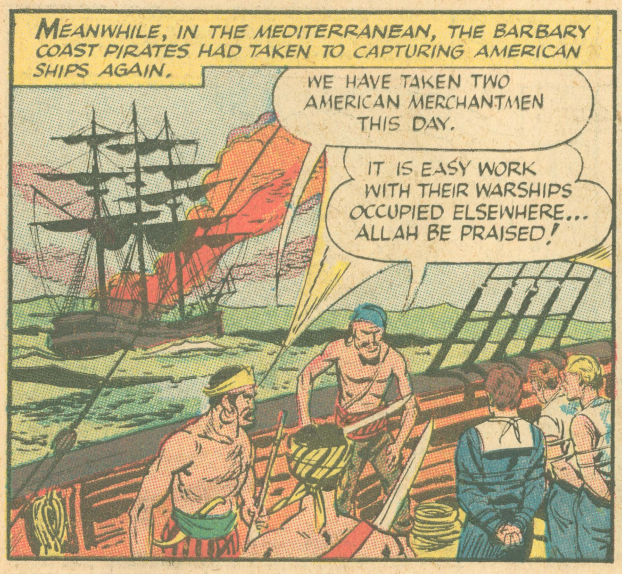

UNDER HER NEW CAPTAIN, THE CONSTELLATION RAN INTO A STORM THREE DAYS OUT OF NEW YORK.
OF ALL THE CURSED LUCK! THIS IS THE WORST GALE I'VE SEEN IN ALL MY YEARS AT SEA!

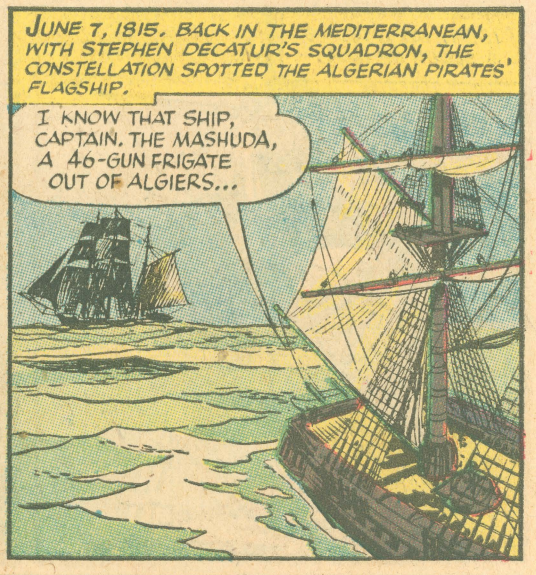

THE CONSTELLATION AND HER CREW FOUGHT THE GALE UNTIL THE BLEARY-EYED MEN COULD HARDLY STAY AWAKE.
I KNOW YOU'RE TIRED, BUT KEEP PUMPING. THE GUN PORTS ARE STOVE IN---AND WE'VE GOT SIX FEET OF WATER IN THE BILGE!

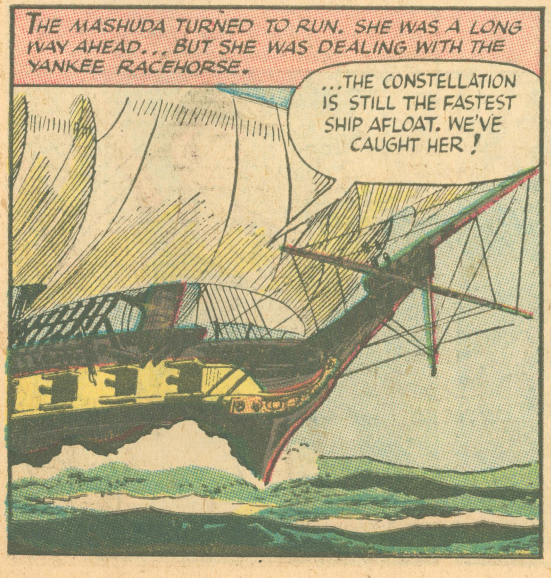
FOR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS THE CONSTELLATION RODE THE GALE...AND THEN RODE OUT OF IT.
I DIDN'T THINK ANY SHIP COULD MAKE IT!

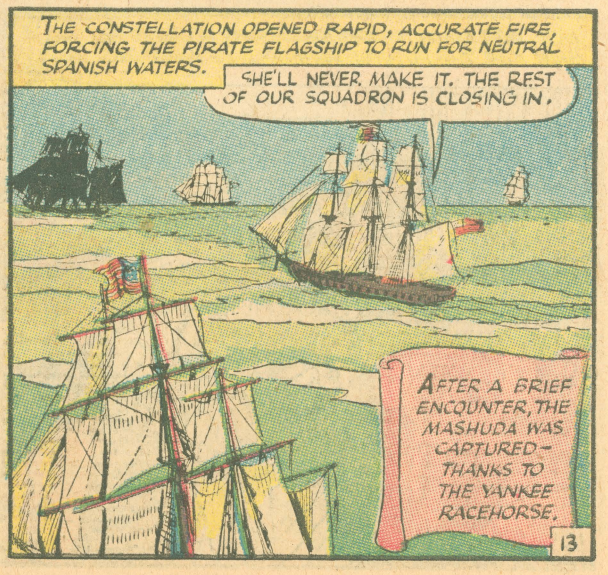
FOR MANY YEARS, THE CONSTELLATION PATROLLED THE MEDITERRANEAN, OLDEST SEA OF HISTORY. IN THE BLOCKADE OF TRIPOLI, 1805...
...THE SQUADRON LED BY COMMODORE SAMUEL BARRON COMPELLED THE BEY OF TUNIS TO SIGN A TREATY.


IN THE WAR OF 1812, THE BRITISH THOUGHT THEY HAD BOTTLED UP THE CONSTELLATION IN CHESAPEAKE BAY...
...NEVERTHELESS HER GUNS BROKE UP AN ATTEMPTED LANDING BY THE BRITISH ON CRANEY ISLAND.

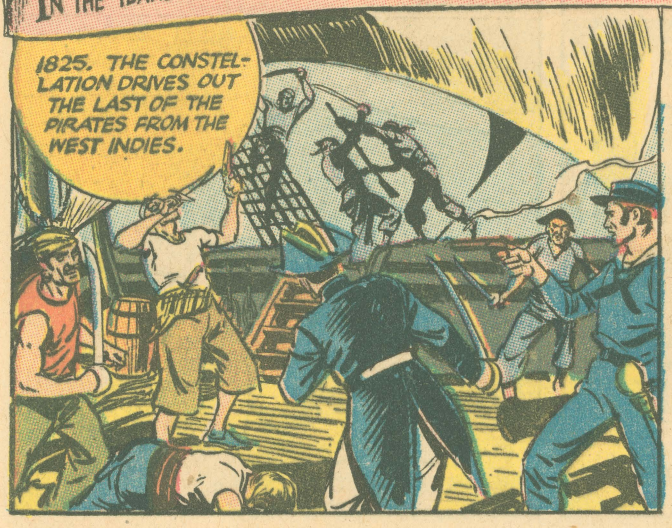

MEANWHILE, IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, THE BARBARY COAST PIRATES HAD TAKEN TO CAPTURING AMERICAN SHIPS AGAIN.
WE HAVE TAKEN TWO AMERICAN MERCHANTMEN THIS DAY.
IT IS EASY WORK WITH THEIR WARSHIPS OCCUPIED ELSEWHERE... ALLAH BE PRAISED!

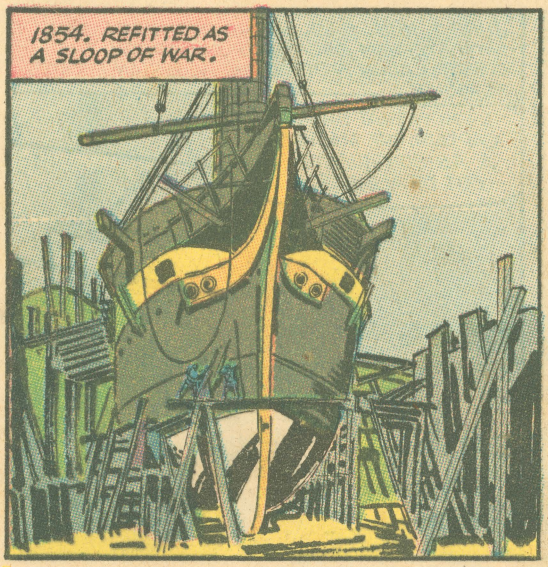

JUNE 7, 1815. BACK IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, WITH STEPHEN DECATUR'S SQUADRON, THE CONSTELLATION SPOTTED THE ALGERIAN PIRATES' FLAGSHIP.
I KNOW THAT SHIP, CAPTAIN. THE MASHUDA, A 46-GUN FRIGATE OUT OF ALGIERS...

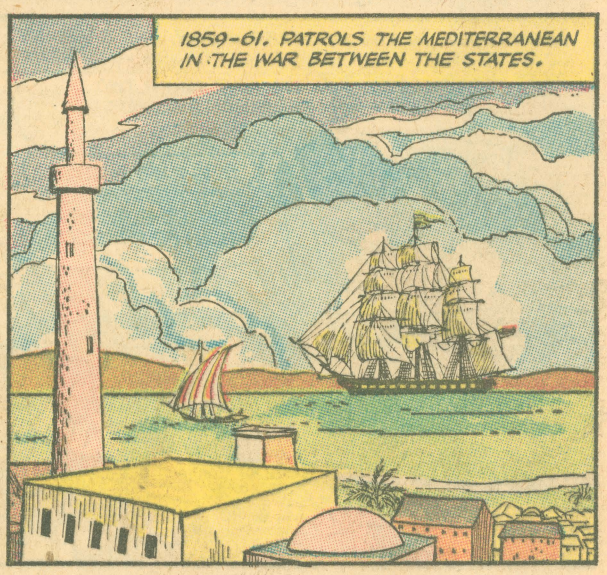

THE MASHUDA TURNED TO RUN. SHE WAS A LONG WAY AHEAD... BUT SHE WAS DEALING WITH THE YANKEE RACEHORSE.
...THE CONSTELLATION IS STILL THE FASTEST SHIP AFLOAT. WE'VE CAUGHT HER!

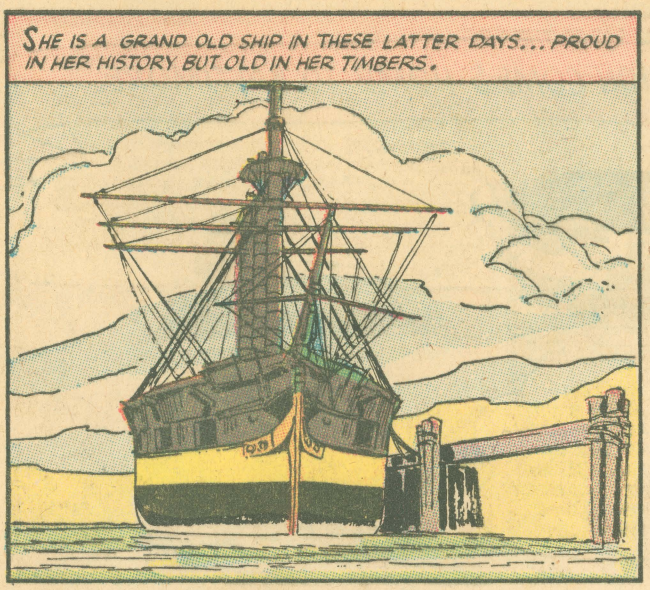

THE CONSTELLATION OPENED RAPID, ACCURATE FIRE, FORCING THE PIRATE FLAGSHIP TO RUN FOR NEUTRAL SPANISH WATERS.
SHE'LL NEVER MAKE IT. THE REST OF OUR SQUADRON IS CLOSING IN.
AFTER A BRIEF ENCOUNTER, THE MASHUDA WAS CAPTURED—THANKS TO THE YANKEE RACEHORSE.

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, THE CONSTELLATION SAILED THE SEVEN SEAS ON HER ADVENTUROUS CAREER...

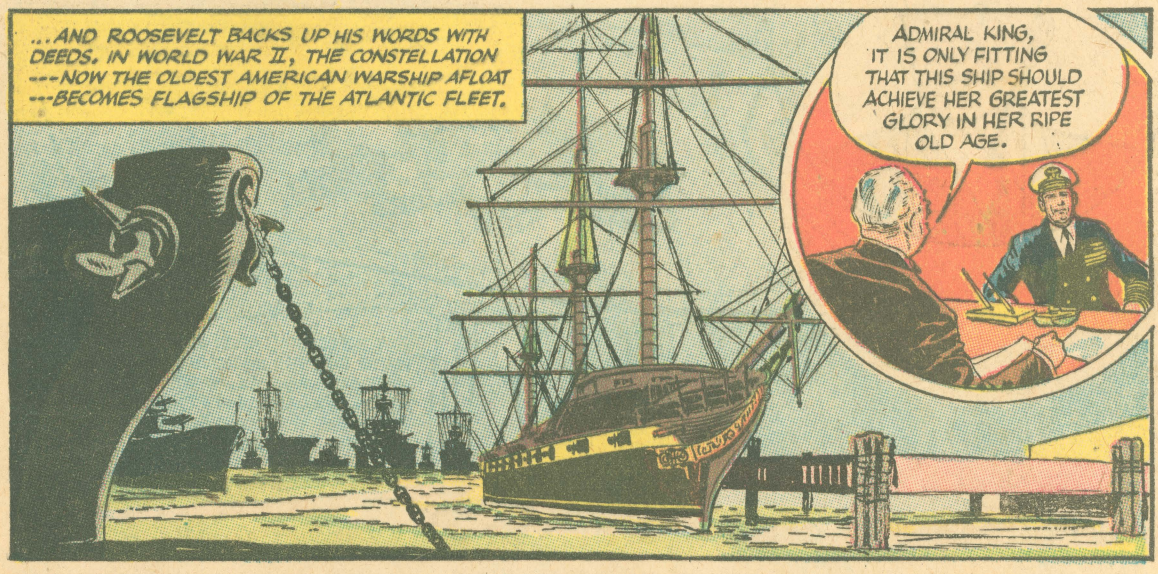


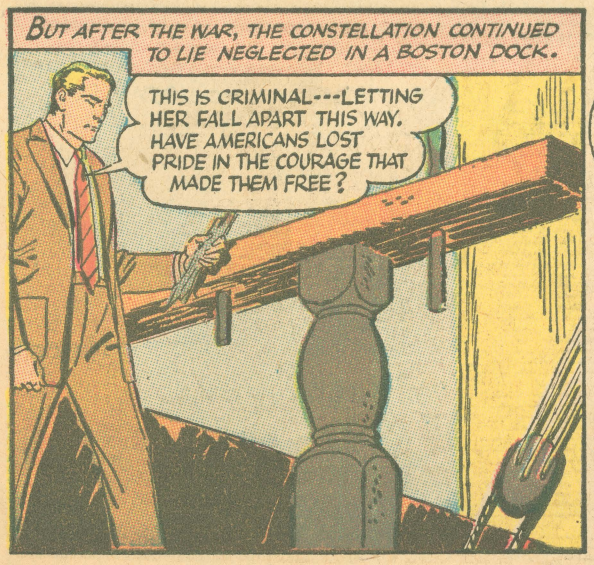


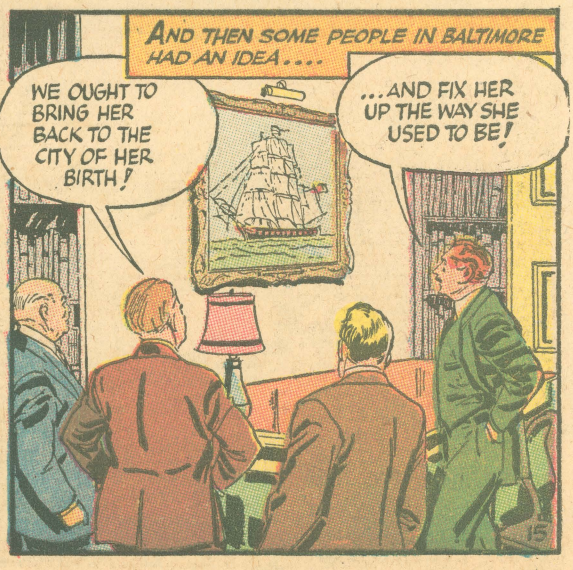



SHE IS A GRAND OLD SHIP IN THESE LATTER DAYS... PROUD IN HER HISTORY BUT OLD IN HER TIMBERS.

IT IS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, THEN UNDER-SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WHO SAYS IN 1914....
THESE FRIGATES SHOULD LIVE ON TO BE AN INSPIRATION TO OUR NATION!


...AND ROOSEVELT BACKS UP HIS WORDS WITH DEEDS. IN WORLD WAR II, THE CONSTELLATION ---NOW THE OLDEST AMERICAN WARSHIP AFLOAT ---BECOMES FLAGSHIP OF THE ATLANTIC FLEET.
ADMIRAL KING, IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT THIS SHIP SHOULD ACHIEVE HER GREATEST GLORY IN HER RIPE OLD AGE.


BUT AFTER THE WAR, THE CONSTELLATION CONTINUED TO LIE NEGLECTED IN A BOSTON DOCK.
THIS IS CRIMINAL---LETTING HER FALL APART THIS WAY. HAVE AMERICANS LOST PRIDE IN THE COURAGE THAT MADE THEM FREE?


AND THEN SOME PEOPLE IN BALTIMORE HAD AN IDEA....
WE OUGHT TO BRING HER BACK TO THE CITY OF HER BIRTH!
...AND FIX HER UP THE WAY SHE USED TO BE!

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